

Wayne Allard

U . S . S E N A T O R • C O L O R A D O

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 23, 2004

CONTACT: Angela de Rocha at (202) 224-5944

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE FUNDS CORPS OF ENGINEERS SELENIUM STUDY

Senator Allard secures \$5 million for watershed and basin-wide analysis

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works voted Wednesday to authorize a \$5 million study of selenium levels in the Colorado River basin. Senator Wayne Allard (R-Colorado) introduced the amendment after being contacted by dozens of water organizations that are urging a statewide approach to the problem.

“Colorado and a number of other Western states have natural deposits of shale that include selenium, which leaches into our streams, rivers and lakes at concentrations that far exceed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife’s proposed standards,” Senator Allard said.

“My amendment to the Water Resources Development Act of 2004 will create a program in the Corps of Engineers to analyze selenium issues and propose mitigation projects,” the Senator said. “Additional scientific information will help determine the extent of the problem and the validity of current assumptions regarding its impact.”

Selenium contamination is an increasing concern in Colorado and the West, although little hard science exists that explores the complexity of the contamination. Elevated concentrations of selenium in Colorado, a headwater state, present challenges to states down stream. The current Environmental Protection Agency recommended water quality standard for selenium is five micrograms per liter to protect fish growth and reproduction. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is recommending a new, two-microgram per liter standard. Naturally occurring selenium is often higher than those levels.

“Clearly, more information is needed,” Senator Allard said. “This study will provide additional sound science that will describe the extent of the problem and propose a way to mitigate it.”

#